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ABSTRACT

This paper explores similarities and differences between Kohlberg's Piagetian or cognitive-developmental view of edcuation and Bruno Bettelheim's psychoanalytic view which stresses the motivational qualities of children's thought. Based on observations of his son, Kohlberg suggests that children's playful attitudes, like their serious ones, reflect their way of thinking, their conception of reality. Examples of children's fantasies are given that can be taken as motivationally or cognitively determined. Cited is the DeVries study which showed that a child's behavior and emotional reaction to the simulated change of a cat to a dog were largely determined by the child's level of thought about constancy, rather than by deeper emotions or fantasies. Children's primitive thinking is seen as a reflection of their cognitive and adaptive reality-orientation. Kohlberg believes that intrinsically valuable educational goals are goals of universals of human development, higher levels of cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and philosophico-religious thoughts, experiences, and actions. He concludes by illustrating his belief that there are parallel stages of cognitive and social development. Social development represents more than cognitive development and has a more complicated logic, but it includes the logic of concepts of the physical world. The most compelling social stages which have their own logic are moral stages, and morality is based on empathy and justice. (JH)

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Lawrence Kohlberg
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PSYCHOANALYTIC AND COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACHES TO MORAL EDUCATION

AERA Symposium on Psychoanalysis and Education

Lawrence Kohlberg

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This paper represents part of an inner dialogue with Bruno Bettlehiem, which has gone on since I was a student in his course in psychoanalytic theory almost thirty years ago.

Through courses and work with children at the Orthogenic School, I learned from Bruno Bettelheim most of what I know about psychoanalytic theory. I hope this paper shows that I not only learned through disagreeing with Bruno and the theory but that it also shows that I learned something from him. I have tried in 20 years of applying Piaget's theory to children to do what Bruno Bettelheim so beautifully did an applying Freud's theory, to cut through the jargon and the abstractions to the unexpected but common truths the theory helps us to see. I hope I learned from Bruno not a content, psychoanalytic theory, but a structure, something of how to use a theory to help see children.

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In this paper, I wish to talk about agreements and disagreements between my Piagetian or cognitive-developmental view of education and Bettelheim's psychoanalytic view. Bettelheim's paper starts with an analysis of children's errors in reading. He points to the fundamental importance of Freud's insight into errors, to the primary process thinking behind the psychopathology of everyday life. Piaget's contributions started with a different but related insight into children's errors, the insight into the concrete logic behind children's wrong answers to the Binet test.

Whereas Freud stressed the motivational qualities of the thought processes behind mistakes, Piaget stressed their cognitive structure. Both Piaget and Freud agree that the structure of children's thinking is different than that of the adult. Beyond that, they disagree.

Piaget finds the primitive structure of children's thinking as consistent with a view of child thought as an effort to adapt to reality, but an adaptation at a more concrete cognitive level. In contrast, psychoanalytic thinking interprets structurally primitive thinking as due to a different motivational orientation to the world; a pleasure-process rather than a reality-process orientation. This theme is developed in both Bettelheim's paper and Mike Bower's. In this paper I shall try to examine the import of this structure vs. motivational account of thought for educational theory. But first we need to go over the common agreements of the two theories about the psychology of education.

Like the psychoanalytic educator, the Piagetian educator starts by saying that the child's difficulties in learning arise from the discrepancies between the child's efforts to make sense of his learning tasks and the adult's definition of those tasks. Bettelheim's paper develops this theme for reading. Bettelheim says "Freud concentrated on depth psychology reasons for misreading, the child's indirect of wishes and anxieties not appropriate to express. Often, however, children's errors are nothing but reasonable efforst to make better sense of an inane text. In Piaget's terms, the child understands the text word but sees no reason to accomodate to it because his own view cleaves more closely to the reality of what the text should say. A girl read that raccoons raid garbages instead of garages because that is what these animals do.

Since the purpose of reading is to discover meaning in the printed page, garbage seems better than garage. A study of errors in reading of first graders has shown that 86% were word substitutions which make equal or better sense than the text. An example is the child's reading "Spot can hear me" for "Spot can help me." Spot is a dog, so it makes little sense to the child that the animal could help him - but a dog can not only hear the child, but also respond appropriately to a command."

I would like to elaborate on Bettelheim's application of this Piagetian approach to the child's difficulties in reading. Piaget's central insight, I have claimed, was to see the child as a philosopher.

The two most basic things which Piaget found out were that the child was a philosopher and that his philosophy went through stages. Freud had found that, just like grown-ups, children were interested in birth and death and sex. But Piaget found that children were largely interested in birth and death and sex because they were bothered by the origins of things, by what is space and time and causality and reality and good and evil, by all the things that are the concerns of the grow-ups called philosophers. To be a philosopher is to be concerned about the basic categories of experience and this is just what young children are interested in. To go through stages is to have qualitative transformations in these categories, changes in world view or philosophy.

Mike Bower has given us an illustration of the Piaget assumption by quoting Einstein. Mike says, "I recall someone asking Einstein how he arrived at his conceptual notions about time and space. He recalls, 'How did it come that I was the one to develop the theory of relativity? The reason, I think, is that a normal adult never stops to think about problems of space and time. These are things which he has thought of as a child. But my intellectual development was retarded, as a result of which I began to wonder about space and time only when I had already grown up. Naturally I could go deeper into the problem that a child with normal abilities.'"

Mike's further comments self-depreciates his own childhood development even more than Einstein's. Mike says, "Not only had I not thought of space and time as a child, but nothing outside the obvious had occured to me about human behavior."

Mike's comment indicates that he is as ignorant about his own childhood philosophizing as adults were about their childhood sexualizing before Freud. If we had observed Mike as an infant or child through Piagetian lenses we would have found a quite different story, the story of the development of conservation of space, time and identity.

Piaget saw that a very young child's excitement at a game of peek-a-boo or hiding came because of his interest in "what is reality?" the problem of differentiating appearance and reality. He loves peek-a-boo because he is differentiating subjective and objective; because he is constructing a world of permanent, unchanging objects. The infant under ten months does not have a conception of a permanent object. If, when he is reaching toward a bright toy it is covered with a handkerchief, he stops reaching; the toy no longer exists to him. By eighteen months he knows objects permanently exist although he cannot see them but it is not until he is about six years old that he views their physical nature and identity as unchangeable. Things that change in appearance change in reality.

It is, of course, part of the charm of young childhood that objects can change their identity and that the young child can play at being, and feel he really is, a variety of persons and creatures. Sometimes this fluidity in the identity of things is a source of anxiety, sometimes a delight. As an example, one Halloween we bought my boy, just turned three, a dog costume. We put it on him in front of the mirror and he

said, "I'm a doggie," and laughed delightedly. I asked him, "Are you a doggie or are you really a boy?" "I'm a doggie, real doggie," and he ran to the kitchen, took a dog biscuit and half-pretended, half-tried to eat it. To say the child is a philosopher is to

say he's interested in the basic terms or categories of experience; to say he develops as a philosopher is to say that his original basic terms are different than ours, they are his. Because the child's philosophy is different than our own we are forced to reflect that we are philosophers, too, that our conceptions of reality, truth and goodness are basic to understanding our own minds.

We have used as an example of basic terms the category of substance, constancy or identity. We have used the concept of constancy as a category because it is present in a new form at each new general stage of thought.

The major cognitive constancies or invariances of the adult's world develop through three levels, the sensorimotor, the intuitive-concrete and the formal-abstract levels. At the end of the sensori-motor period the child has mastered the constancy of objects in place and time. He has not, however, established what attributes of an object can change and which cannot. The child at the intuitive-concrete level, like my son, has not mastered all the basic invariances. He does establish them at around age six to seven when he is capable of reasoning with concrete operations, i.e., logical operations of addition, subtraction, inclusion, reciprocity, etc. At the formal operational level, the invariances established are those of underlying physical laws. Through hypothetico-deductive reason, the adolescent child can grasp the invariance of lawful variance:

Even more basically, Piaget's claim that the child is a philosopher is to say that the child is someone who says "I want to know why."

I want to pick up this claim in relation to Bettelheim's discussion of reading and the child's need to say reading as an activity which has a why, a purpose.

Bruno tells us that the child wants to make sense out of the text "Spot can help me" so he reads it as "Spot can hear me." Bruno says it makes little sense to the child to say that a dog can help him but it does make sense that a dog can hear him. I disagree, but my disagreement will clarify our shared agreements about a Piagetian insistance that reading make sense to the child.

In a second grade Follow-Through classroom observed by a colleague, a teacher attempted to explain to children why books and reading were important. She told them that "books are a child's best friend." One boy became visibly upset, raised his hand and said, "But books aren't a boy's best friend, a dog is a boy's best friend. Books don't help you and care about you, dogs do."

Bruno is wrong in saying that dogs helping doesn't make sense to the child; it is books helping that often doesn't make sense to the child. In your handouts you will see the cognitive-moral stages through which the child progresses.

Mike Bower says that nothing outside the "obvious had occured to him about human behavior as a child" but our studies of the development of the child's thinking about human social and moral behavior shows they think about some things that are not obvious.

My colleague, Bob Selman, has been elaborating the development of children's concepts of friendship, as these go through stages paralleling our more moral stages. The studies show that the idea that a dog is a boy's best friend, is obvious to our second graders though it is not obvious to neither Mike Bower or Bruno Bettelheim.

On the other hand, the idea that books are a boy's best friend, obvious to the teacher is ridiculous to the boy.

Our second grader is moving from the second to the third stage in the hand-out. He is beginning to distinguish between things which you need and use instrumentally, like books or tools, and persons with whom you enter into mutual and affectionate relations. Dogs are persons and can be friends, books are not. For many an adolescent, books can be friends, they are vehicles for dialogues with the mind of an author. But such an idea is ridiculous to the concrete operational child. The fact that the second grader got upset, however, showed his readiness to listen to a teacher's answers to "why read?". It shows that he is a philosopher who wants to know why. If only the answer could have some relation to the child's concrete operational level of thinking about the question.

Pursuing the child's why's about reading, I encouraged a colleague, Ellen Berger, to do a study on the development of the child's thinking about why read, what is the purpose of reading and writing, what does it mean to read? Dr. Berger works at the Judge Baker Clinic with children with learning disabilities. She interviewed these children and children matched on IQ and social class reading at grade level.

> The children were asked about the meaning and purposes of letters, words, and reading. The answers could be classified in terms of levels or stages related to age. At the earliest level, letters and words were just physical things to be associated and manipulated. At the highest stage, letters, words, and books were seen as systems for communication. The children with learning disabilities were retarded in their level of construing the meaning of reading and writing, though they were similar to normal controls on other Piagetian cognitive tasks.

The study was a pilot study which can be interpreted in a number of ways. It does suggest that reading, like other content areas of education, needs to be viewed as Bruno says, in terms of "what people do to reading as well as what reading does to people." If the educator attempts to be aware of what children do to reading, he may be able to better define what reading does, or should do, to and for people.

Basically, I think Bruno and I would agree that what reading should do for people is to stimulate their development, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, personal. In a paper with Rochelle Mayers called Development as the Aim of Education, I have stressed differences between the psychoanalytic view of education and the John Dewey - Piaget position I espouse. In that paper, we point to three recurrent approaches to education throughout history, the cultural transmission view, the romantic view, and the progressive or cognitive-developmental view.

Romanticism - We say the first stream of thought, the "romantic", commences with Rousseau and is currently represented by Freud's and Gesell's followers. A. S. Neill's Summerhill represents an example of a school based on this romantic view. Romantics hold that what comes from within the child is the most important aspect of development; therefore the pedagogical environment should be permissive enough to allow the inner "good" (abilities and social virtues) to unfold and the inner "bad" to come under control. Thus teaching the child the ideas and attitudes of others through rote or drill would result in meaningless learning and the suppression of inner spontanious tendencies of positive value.

Romantics stress the biological metaphors of "health" and "growth" in equating optimal physical development with bodily health and optimal mental development with mental health.

In contrast, we say the cultural transmission view is rooted in the classical academic tradition of Western aducation. Traditional educators believe that their primary task is the transmission to the present generation of bodies of information and of rules or values collected in the past; they believe that the educator's job is the direct instruction of such information and rules. Educating consists of transmitting knowledge, skills, and social and moral rules of the culture.

More modern or innovative variations of the cultural transmission view are represented by educational technology and behavior modification.[1] Like traditional education, these approaches assume that knowledge and values - first located in the culture - are afterwards internalized by children through the imitation of adult behavior models, or through explicit instruction and reward and punishment. Accordingly, the educational technologist evaluates the individual's success in terms of his ability to incorporate the responses he has been taught ant to respond favorably to the demands of the system.

We contrast the Dewey-Piaget progressive view with both the romantic and cultural transmission view. Progressivism holds that education should nourish the child's natural interaction with a developing society or environment. Unlike the romantics, the progressives do not assume that development is the unfolding of an innate pattern or that the primary aim of education is to create an unconflicted environment able to foster healthy development. Instead, they define development as a progression through invariant ordered sequential stages. The educational goal is the eventual attainment of a higher level or stage of development in adulthood, not merely the healthy functioning of the child at a present level.

In the progressive view, this aim requires an educational environment that actively stimulates development through the presentation of resolvable but genuine problems or conflicts. For progressives, the organizing and developing force in the child's experience is the child's active thinking, and thinking is stimulated

by the problematic, by cognitive conflict. Educative experience makes the child think - think in ways which organize both cognition and emotion.

In actuality the psychoanalytic view of education can and often is a mixture of all three approaches. In Bruno's paper on reading, he stresses the romantic side. In his discussions of moral education he has stressed the cultural transmission side, the necessity of transmitting through processes of anxiety and identification with authority the core moral norms of the culture, the super-ego.

In the end, I believe, Bruno is mainly on the progressive side, the side of Development as the Aim of Education, development through universals of cognitive-developmental interaction. In terms of reading ond other academic skills, I believe both Bruno and I agree that the mistake in education is to make means into ends. Reading and other academic knowledge and skills are means, instrumentalities, not ends. Our American culture wants to see all educational goals in terms of means. I have called this the industrial psychology approach to defining educational aims. Reading and writing are skills or achievements which help get better jobs. Jencks and others have shown that academic skills don't help children make more money later, something I took for granted in taking up an academic profession. Educational goals can not be ultimately defined by treating skills or means as ends. I believe like Dewey that the educational goals and achievements which can be stated as intrinsically rather than instrumentally valuable are goals of universals of human development, higher levels of cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and philosophio-religious thoughts, experiences, and action. Two high school students may be at the same level in reading skills but one reads Plato or Dostoevsky, the other the comics. Reading Plato is not a good in itself, but it can be an experience which is a means or stimulus toward cognitive, moral, and aesthetic development.

Given a developmental view of education, let us consider the major differences between the psychoanalytic and cognitive-developmental views. In setting developmental benchmarks for educators, the Piagetian refuses to split cognitive and affective features of development.

Let us turn to the contrast with which we started out, the contrast between the Piaget characterization of child's illogic as concreted and the psychoanalytic characterization of it as primary process or pleasure-principle oriented.

Psychoanalysts who have listened to the spontanious things children say to Piaget questions are not used to thinking of the child as a philosopher establishing constancies and other categories of experience. Instead, they hear these things as "fantasy" as the expression of the child's desires and wishes uncontrolled by outer reality.

While the cognitive-developmental view does not deny the child's "fantasy" it interprets it differently. "Fantasy" is play and the child moves easily from play to sober attitudes toward objects. His play attitude, however, is not ignoring of reality, it is not "primary process" nor is it primarily motivated by untamed drives of sex and aggression. Rather, the child's play, like his "work" attitudes toward the world are directed toward mastery.

Let us return to my three year old son playing at being a doggie to my questions about his dog-costume.

When my son pretended to eat the dog biscuit it was not because of any oral need but it was his effort to master the reality-appearance distinction through a playful attitude. The child's playful attitudes, like his more serious attitudes, reflect his general way of thinking, his conception of reality. To illustrate this point, I shall discuss a study with an element of play as well as of seriousness in it. It was a doctoral study by Rheta DeVries which I supervised, which started from the observations of the young child's sense of the constancy of identity which I have just described in terms of reactions to a Halloween costume. Because children vary too much in their reactions to people in costumes and masks we chose another situation for systematic study of children's constancy reactions. Instead of putting a mask on a human, we put a mask of a small, fierce dog on a live and well-trained cat named Maynard.

In response to this masking of the cat, children of three and four when asked what the animal is, tend to say it is now a dog and feed it dog food when given a choice. Children of six tend to be firmly aware of what is going on, as do many of the five-year-olds. Of most interest are the reactions of the five-year-olds who can't make up their minds as to what is going on.

As an example, Janice pets the cat with warmth before the mask is put on. She withdraws sharply after the mask is put on, but looks closely at the animal. When asked, she says the animal is a dog but adds, "If I put my finger near his mouth, he really won't bite me, will he?" She doesn't

try the experiment. When pressed, she says the cat turned into a dog, but when pressed further, says it's not a real dog; it just has on a dog face. Finally, she agrees to pet it and does so very gingerly. Again, she is asked whether it is a real dog and she answers, "That's the problem, is it a cat or a dog? I think it's a dog. I'll feel his ears. It is a dog... but still it has cat's eyes so how can it be a dog? I think it's a dog."

Janice has a true scientific openminded and exploratory attitude toward the animal's identity, which she will soon lose for a closed-minded view that cats are cats and dogs are dogs and cats can't be dogs, no matter what.

Why did Rheta DeVries do the study?

The critics of Piaget argue that Piaget asks children silly questions and gets silly answers. As elaborated by psychoanalysis, the criticism is that what children say to Piaget is not due to a different logic or reality orientation but because children give fantasy responses to unreal or abstract questions. However, we found that behavior and emotion in this situation were consistent with what they said. Only the children who say, "He is a real dog," refuse to pet the animal and are generally fearful. The child's fear in this situation, like my son's play with the dog biscuit, reflected his level of thinking about realities not his deeper fears or fantasies.

The DeVries study which showed that the child's behavior and emotional reaction to the change of a cat to a dog was largely determined by his general level of thought about constancy, rather than by emotions and fantasy. To say this does not deny that the content of children's thinking does have Freudian elements, but it does imply that this Freudian content must be understood as consistent with, and in part generated by, young children's prelogical thought, rather than as the intrusion of "primary process" fantacy into "secondary process"

adapted thought. To clarify this point let us use another example, an example suggesting a psychoanalytic interpretation of the intrusion of fantasy, a spontaneous response made by Jimmy, a boy just turned five: "I can be a girl, you know. I can. I can wear a wig and have my throat so I can talk like a girl." It would seem plausible to attribute the immature logic of this statement to the fact that the boy's wishes and conflicts in this area were strong enough to override his interests in being realistic or correct. On another occasion, however, the writer (experimenter) had the following conversation with Jimmy:

Experimenter: Do airplanes get small when they fly away in the sky?

Jimmy: Yes, they get real tiny.

Experimenter: Do they really get small, or do they just look small?

Jimmy: They really get small.

Experimenter: What happens to the people inside?

Jimmy: They shrink.

Experimenter: How can they shrink and get small?

Jimmy: They cut their heads off.

These statements might also be taken as motivationally determined, rather than as a reflection of Jimmy's general level of thinking. Obviously, in the second conversation, Jimmy doesn't care about being correct, and ends up making a "fantasy" response. Sometimes Jimmy may care too much (sex-role), sometimes too little (airplane query), but if his general level of thinking is the same, it is hard to maintain that this level is a

product of affective rather than cognitive-structural factors. The point is that Jimmy's belief that he can be a girl is consistent with his general prelogical thought pattern rather than being a specific fantasy in conflict with his "reality oriented" thought.

The child's primitive thinking then, is a reflection of orientation to reality, which is cognitive and adaptive, not [illegible]-determined. In calling it cognitive, I do not mean it is divorced from emotion. No one ever had a thought without emotion or an emotion without a thought before he became an obsessive-compulsive neurotic or an academic. Every emotion involves some perception of the world and the self. As these perceptions change with development, so do emotions.

Our position holds that there are parallel features or stages of cognitive and social development. Social and moral development is more than cognitive development, social development has a more complicated logic but it is one which includes the logic of concepts of the physical world. The most compelling social stages which have their own logic are moral stages. The reason the most compelling social stages are moral is because the child is not only a philosopher about the physical world but because he is a moral philosopher concerned about the categories of good and evil. To indicate what this means, I'll quote an example from my son at age five which illustrates Stage 1 in morality. It also illustrates that children generate their own morality in spite of all of fond parents' efforts to transmit the cultural superego.

At the age of five my son joined the pacifist and vegetarian movement and refused to eat meat because he said it's bad to kill animals. In spite of his parents' attempts to dissuade him by arguing about the difference between justified and unjustified killing, he remained a vegetarian for six months. However, like most Doves, he did recognize that some forms of killing were "legitimate." One night I read to him from a book about Eskimo life which included a description of a seal-killing expedition. While listening to the story he became very angry and said, "You know, there is one kind of meat I would eat, Eskimo meat. It's bad to kill animals so it's all right to eat them."

Basic to morality is a concern for the life of others, not because such concern is taught but because of an immediate empathic response. Children's concern for animal's lives is not taught, I quoted earlier my boy saying, "I really am a doggie." Such self-projection naturally leads to empathy. Pain at death is a natural empathic response, though it is not necessarily universally and consistently maintained. In this example, the value of life led both to vegetarianism and to the desire to kill Eskimos. This latter desire comes also from a universal value tendency - a belief in justice or <u>reciprocity</u> here expressed in terms of revenge or punishment - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth

others cannot expect their own rights to be respected. Empathy and justice, then, are the basis of morality, each higher stage is a new stage in the sense of empathy and justice.

Guilt, a moral emotion much stressed by psychoanalysis, does not occur in a direct form until the sense of empathy and justice has developed to our third stage, where empathy involves the ability to understand the Golden Rule and put yourself in the other's place, and justice involves the concept of expiation for wrong. Before that, there is anxiety after transgression but not guilt. Ruma and Mosher interviewed and tested delinquint boys around their guilt feelings about transgressions they had engaged in. Only those Stage 3 or above in the standard moral dilemmas displayed guilt in the interview, or on a projective test of guilt.

Following a developmental timetable, my son moved to this instrumentally relativist Stage 2 orientation when he was seven, a stage sometimes expressed in a very expedient view toward morality. At that time he told me, "You know, the reason people don't steal is because they're afraid of the police. If there were no police around, everyone would steal." Of course I told him that I (and most people) didn't steal because we thought it wrong, because we wouldn't want other people to take things from us, and so on. My son's reply was, "I just don't see it, it's sort of crazy not to steal if there are no police."

Of course I said all the right things, all the reasons I didn't steal even when the police weren't around, but he just thought I was a sucker.

Luckily he moved on to a higher stage and at age 14, he is now generating guilt in me about eating meat. He recently asked me, "Dad, suppose there were two people dying, one was Einstein and the other retarded. Which should you save?"

I know that though one was retarded and the other Einstein, both were philosophers so I said, "It's hard. Both are persons and even though Einstein is more intelligent and contributed more to society, I think both lives are equal and I'd have to draw straws."

My son said, "Then intelligence shouldn't decide." I said, "Yes." "Then contribution to society shouldn't decide." I answered, "Yes." Then my son asked, "Why do you say animal life is less valuable than human life?" While I flustered, he said, "You think you're Stage 6 because you value human life but I must be Stage 7 because I have respect for all life."

Luckily my son is no Albert Schweitzer and there are even more inconsistencies between his judgment and his actions than mine. But he had a point. And a good educator, psychoanalytic or Piagetian, admits it when a child has a point.